

The unexamined life is not worth living

"**The unexamined life is not worth living**" (Ancient Greek: ὁ ... ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ) is a famous *dictum* apparently uttered by Socrates at his trial for impiety and corrupting youth, for which he was subsequently sentenced to death, as described in Plato's *Apology* (38a5–6).

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Rationale

This statement relates to Socrates' understanding and attitude towards death and his commitment to fulfill his goal of investigating and understanding the statement of the Pythia (i.e. that there was no one wiser than Socrates). Socrates understood the Pythia's response to Chaerephon's question as a communication from the god Apollo and this became Socrates's prime directive, his *raison d'être*. For Socrates, to be separated from elenchus by exile (preventing him from investigating the statement) was therefore a fate worse than death. Since Socrates was religious and trusted his religious experiences, such as his guiding daimonic voice, he accordingly preferred to continue to seek the truth to the answer to his question, in the after-life, than live a life not identifying the answer on earth.^[1]

Meaning

The words were supposedly spoken by Socrates at his trial after he chose death rather than exile. They represent (in modern terms) the noble choice, that is, the choice of death in the face of an alternative.^[2]

Interpretation

Socrates believed that philosophy – *the love of wisdom* – was the most important pursuit above all else. For some, he exemplifies more than anyone else in history the pursuit of wisdom through questioning and logical argument, by examining and by thinking. His 'examination' of life in this way spilled out into the lives of others, such that they began their own 'examination' of life, but he knew they would all die one day, as saying that a life without philosophy – an 'unexamined' life – was not worth living.^{[3][4]}

References

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External links

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 - J. O. Famakinwa – IS THE UNEXAMINED LIFE WORTH LIVING OR NOT? (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8512387&fileId=S1477175612000073>) Think / Volume 11 / Issue 31 / Summer 2012, pp 97–103 *The Royal Institute of Philosophy 2012*
 - J. M. Ambury – *Socrates (469—399 B.C.E.) -2biii - The Unexamined Life* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/socrates/#SSH2biii>) in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
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